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before the  
Federal Facilities Task Force  
National Governors Association  
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Good Afternoon. Over the last day and a half, you have heard from some of our leadership team. You have discussed some of the initiatives, strategies, and reforms that we are moving forward on to further bring clarity and focus to the cleanup mission and delivering on our commitments. To complement that, I would like to provide you a picture of how our earnest effort has produced meaningful advancements -- advancements brought about by changing how we view our role in accomplishing our mission objectives and delivering on our responsibilities.

In a few short years, I am proud to say, we have made a startling change from managing risk to an approach that embodies an accelerated risk reduction and cleanup focus. A journey started when skepticism and uneasiness about the program abounded and at a time when the program had been assailed on increasing cost and schedule while achieving a disproportionately small amount of risk reduction.

When I took this job almost three years ago, I knew there were at least two things we all absolutely agreed upon and I restate them every time I speak:

- 1) The need to get on with cleanup -- to remove or mitigate potential risk, and
- 2) Ensure the safety of our workforce that's doing the job while at the same time achieving positive environmental improvements.

Together, we have taken decisive steps to transform this program. Our concerted efforts are delivering fundamental change and achieving significant improvements in health, safety, and environmental protection. And with these actions, we are also making an historic contribution to reducing the financial liability associated with the legacy of the Cold War.

- We have improved Safety Performance and we will continue to do so. We are committed to instilling this philosophy in every worker's day-to-day decisions from the start to the finish of every project. We are demonstrating that we can accelerate work and improve safety performance at the same time. We have not nor will we stop paying attention to safety. We will continue to "raise the bar" and hold ourselves accountable to the highest safety standards. Complacency is not acceptable in our advance to the safe conclusion of our clean up objectives and we will continue to challenge ourselves to ensure continued improvements.
- We have demonstrated Cleanup Results and Risk Reduction. Last year, we set a new floor of performance not seen before in the history of the program. I say floor because we see this as a level of performance that we will continue to build on. Over the last two years, for example:

At the Savannah River Site, we have

- Increased waste loading in the Defense Waste Processing Facility by over 30 percent, resulting in a one-third reduction in the number of canisters to be produced that will require deep geologic isolation.
- Completed packaging of all plutonium (Pu) metal and initiated Pu-packing operations; completed the packing of first DOE STD 3013 container.
- Emptied the spent nuclear fuel from the Receiving Basin for Off-Site Fuel.
- Repackaged and disposed of the worst 10 percent of the site's depleted uranium.
- Completed deinventory and commenced deactivation of the F-Canyon facility.

At the Hanford Site, we have

- Completed waste retrieval from C-106, the first at the Hanford tank farms; retrieval of tank S-112 is eighty three percent complete; retrieval equipment installations are nearing completion on the next four tanks.
- Removed over 99 percent of liquids from single-shell tanks, greater than three million gallons to date, with only 500 gallons remaining to be pumped from one tank.
- Removed 70 percent of the spent nuclear fuel from the K-Basins.
- Placed all Pu in 3,013 storage containers.
- Stabilized and packaged all residues.
- Commenced Fast Flux Test Facility deactivation on April 7, along with draining the sodium.

At the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site, we have

- Completed 80 percent of the project and are firmly on track for 2006 closure.
- Removed over 85 percent of the gloveboxes --1,241 of 1,457.

At the Idaho National Laboratory, we have

- Deinventoried three spent nuclear fuel pools; 93 percent of spent nuclear fuel in Idaho is in dry storage.
- Emptied and cleaned five large waste pillar and panel tanks.
- Completed waste excavation work at Waste Area 7.
- Constructed and commenced operation of a 500,000 cubic meter Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act disposal facility.

In Ohio, we have

- Removed all legacy transuranic (TRU) waste from the Mound Site.
- Removed all Pu-238 from the Mound Site and all nuclear material from the Fernald Site.
- Decontaminated and demolished 57 percent (77) of the facilities at Mound and 75 percent (157) of the facilities at Fernald.

At the West Valley Demonstration Project Site, we have

- Removed all spent nuclear fuel.
- Emptied and decontaminated the spent nuclear fuel basin.

- Completed vitrification (275 high-level waste canisters generated) and melter shutdown.

At Oak Ridge, we have

- Commenced uranium converter removal operations in Building K-29 at East Tennessee Technology Park.
- Defueled tower shielding reactor.
- Removed all EM spent nuclear fuel from the site.

At the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, we have

- Completed removal of TRU waste at four small-quantity sites and initiated TRU shipments from the Nevada Test Site.
- Closed Panel 1; Panel 2 is receiving waste; Panel 3 is under construction. Submitted Recertification Application signifying five years of safe operation.

I can go on and on with examples of accelerated risk reduction and cleanup. We have accomplished outcomes of significant importance to the public, our communities, and for the generations that follow us.

Three years ago, the response to the hazards at our DOE sites and the liability associated with them did not appear to dictate the need for urgency. Innovative actions in all elements of the EM program were needed to transform DOE's processes and operations to reflect an accelerated risk-based cleanup consciousness. We are more than ever encouraging innovation in safety performance, accelerated risk reduction, and business management. We believe that through providing an atmosphere that encourages innovation, we can reduce risk to workers and the environment faster, and save resources to be reinvested in furthering the cleanup priorities of each of the sites.

The Environmental Management transformation was driven by the necessity to improve the environmental and safety posture at our sites utilizing a workforce with knowledge and experience in how to do this work. It was driven by the concern that by lagging so long, we would be forced to create a new generation of Cold War hazardous workers -- a workforce lacking the experience and knowledge of the activities of the last 50 years -- experience which has had an instrumental impact on the cleanup efforts thus far. The environmental hazards we are dealing with are here, we aren't creating them. There is no "silver bullet" to erase them -- if we discover magic later, we can eliminate them where they are. We have all had to re-evaluate previous accepted strategies and cleanup methods and recommit to safely and expeditiously cleaning up the Cold War legacy. We can't avoid tough decisions. We will hold ourselves accountable for delivering on risk reduction.

Ironically, while historically there was tremendous insistence that the Department of Energy be in compliance with regulations, the pressure to actually reduce or eliminate risk was not comparable. But that is the job before us and the job we are doing. Let me be clear, even though difficult decisions lie before us, we are not seeking changes that would compromise protection of public health and safety and the environment, and we will not tolerate any contractor performance that fails to meet safety or environmental requirements.

For that very reason, we have a responsibility to define risk-based end states to assure long-term protection of the public and the environment. Without taking this approach, we cannot achieve a credible and sustainable protective cleanup. Collectively knowing our end states, based on risk to the public and the environment, will ensure that our workforce is accomplishing results essential to achieving our cleanup and risk reduction objectives. We can then demonstrate that our workforce is doing the right work, the necessary work.

Most of the compliance issues DOE faces today could have been prevented. Only in the past few years have we begun to develop and apply the necessary preventive measures and a process for their implementation.

By focusing on developing a logical cleanup plan for the site as a whole that incorporates risk-based end states, rather than specific areas of concern, we can all avoid potentially unnecessary worker risk and resource expenditures. We can credibly insure we are doing the right work. The path forward is simple in concept, but difficult to implement. The establishment of a risk-based end state for each environmental cleanup site will be a necessity.

Cleanup must continue to emphasize risk reduction. We have an excellent opportunity to demonstrate positive and quantifiable environmental results of our efforts while protecting public health and improving environmental quality. This is what we're here to do. While the environmental cleanup program has made significant progress, it is now time to turn this momentum into an enduring culture that will drive long-term success of the cleanup effort and effectively eliminate the environmental legacy of the Cold War on our watch. This work must be done in a manner that is safe for workers, protective of the environment and responsible to the taxpayers. This is our mission, this is our obligation.

Cleanup of the Cold War legacy is a difficult, challenging job. We know there will be many impediments. We have hard decisions to make today. We will have hard decisions to make in the future. We have no choice. We must make them. The only full and true measure of success will be the positive, measurable accomplishments of public safety and environmental protection. We are safer today than we were last year and we must stay the course so we are safer next year than we are today.